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## Please Hammer, Hurt 'Em

September 01, 2006

by Joe Brown

*Stanley revamps a classic construction tool and nails it.*

**Stanley Tools Fubar**

Price: \$40

www.stanleytools.com

My first instinct is to get the hell out of here. I don't think for a second that the police officer is talking to me. "Sir," the cop half-shouts, "I'm not going to ask you again. Put down the axe and stop where you are." Then it dawns on me: It's 10 a.m. in Harlem, and I probably should have put the Fubar in a sack.



Fubar technically stands for functional utility bar, but the Stanley Tools designers were referencing military shorthand for fucked up beyond all recognition. Fitting, since the tool is the result of eight months of R&D aimed at designing a hammer specifically for demolition. Yeah, I guess it kind of looks like an axe.

"We wanted to make it look aggressive," says product designer Joe Martone, "almost medieval, so that nobody would mistake it for an ordinary hammer." Excellent job. The nightstick-wielding patrolman probably thinks I'm about to grease somebody. Truth is, I'm just not a morning person. I explain to the officer that Fubar is not some peasant-killer from the Dark Age, and he lets me lower my hands. I promise to stop in a deli for a paper bag. Afterwards I make my way to a prearranged construction site, where I proceed to beat the crap out of a wall until all that remains is a thin cloud of white dust and a heap of debris. The wall never had a chance. Every part of Fubar is designed to destroy.

Originally, Stanley set out simply to update the hammer. The company's designers watched construction workers and realized that modern craftsmen don't really drive nails with hammers for that they use pneumatic guns. Yet every worker still has one. Why? Because hammers are also great at punching holes in walls, prying nailed-together planks apart, and causing the general destruction that must occur for construction to proceed.

Still, there were lots of opportunities to improve a hammer's destructiveness. One was modifying the striking face. A hammer does an excellent job of putting a hole in a sheet of drywall, but all the force you exert is concentrated in a small area. The Fubar, on the other hand, has a square, sledgehammer-like striking face connected to the handle by a flattened shaft that Stanley calls a "breaker edge." It provides a secondary striking surface that tears walls apart instead of simply punching holes leaving a wake of ripped drywall. The designers were originally going to sharpen the edge for better cutting ability, but they still wanted the tool to drive nails. "People often miss nails," said Martone, "and we were worried about taking fingers off."

While the breaker edge is odd-looking, the jaws on the opposite side are positively fierce. More than any other feature, they give Fubar its sadistic appearance. Sized to fit 2x4 wall studs and 5/4 deck planks—the two sizes of wood contractors encounter most—these jaws grip, twist, and rip. They're the major advantage Fubar has over a traditional hammer. Hit drywall hard enough with anything and it'll break, but the wood inside the wall puts up a fight. Fubar's jaws give the pulling action that it takes to dispatch a board quickly.

They're so useful that Fubar's designers couldn't decide whether the jaws or the striking face belonged on the front of the tool. So they didn't: The handle delivers the same grip from either side. And because Stanley wanted to best the traditional hammer in every respect, they morphed the bottom of

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the handle into a pry bar, trumping a hammer's crow's foot head.

Don't cry for the hammer. It had a good run, and its alternative skill set—destruction—provided it with a second career that most outmoded implements would envy. Whatever the good folks at Stanley tell you, this is not a completely new tool; sure, it's got some new Kung Fu, but on the inside, it's the same old hunk of metal that just wants to be held while you turn a room into rubble.

*Joe Brown breaks things for a living as an associate editor at Popular Science. His review of Vibram Fivefingers shoes appeared in the January 2006 I.D.*

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